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ABSTRACT

Children's perceptions of the roles of mother, father, and teacher were examined in a sample of 98 children of 7 to 9 years. Children of working mothers numbered 54. Interview data were coded into five main role categories: Domestic, Child Care, Paid Work, Biological, and Personal. Results showed no effect of age or maternal work status on children's responses. Mothers were perceived as doing the most domestic work, whereas fathers were perceived as mainly doing repairs or outdoor tasks. Nearly the same number of responses described mothers and fathers as doing child care. Mothers were perceived as more likely to perform routine care and fathers are more likely to take children on outings or to provide stimulation. Fathers were more likely to be described as doing paid work than mothers. Teachers were perceived primarily as fulfilling an educational role in the classroom. About one-fifth of the sample described verbal control of behavior, custodial child care, and positive socioemotional responses as part of the teacher's role, but no children ascribed domestic activity to teachers. Perceptions of parents by primary school children were found to be very similar to those held by preschool children in a previous study. (Author/RH)

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Primary School Children's Perceptions of Parent and Teacher Roles

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Abstract

Children's perceptions of the roles of mother, father and teacher were examined in a sample of 98 seven to nine year-old children, 54 with working mothers and 44 with non working mothers. Interview data were coded into 5 main role categories of Domestic, Child Care, Paid Work, Biological and Personal. Results showed no effect of age or maternal work status on children's responses. Mothers were perceived as doing the most domestic work, especially cooking, cleaning and shopping whereas fathers were perceived as mainly doing outdoor tasks or repairs. While the overall number of responses describing mothers and fathers as doing child care was similar, mothers were more likely to be perceived as doing routine child care and fathers as taking children on outings or providing stimulation. Fathers were also more likely to be described as doing paid work than mothers. Perceptions of parents by primary school children were found to be very similar to those of preschool children in a previous study. Teachers were perceived by children primarily as fulfilling an educational role in the classroom setting. Verbal control of behaviour, custodial child care and positive socioemotional responses were described by about one fifth of the sample as part of the teacher's role but no children described any domestic activities for teachers. Primary school children's perceptions differed from preschool children's mainly in seeing the teacher's role as even more specific and differentiated from the role of parents. Results of the study were interpreted within a social interactionist framework suggesting that children acquire social representations within the context of joint action with familiar people in familiar settings.

Primary School Children's Perceptions of Parent and Teacher Roles

How children perceive the roles of the most important adults in their social world may be a key aspect of early social development. Such social cognitions are likely to influence children's social interactions, self concepts and expectations for future development. Children's perceptions of maternal and paternal roles are also closely related to the development of children's gender concepts. The present study explores the nature of children's understanding of parent and teacher roles and whether understanding is related to social experience and to age.

Martin & Halverson (1981) analyse sex role stereotyping using an information-processing model. They believe that sex stereotyping is a normal cognitive process involving the development of schemas, rather than a faulty or dysfunctional process. Cognitive schemas organize and structure information, and consequently influence children's perceptions of reality. Schema-consistent information is salient and likely to be attended to, encoded and recalled while schema-inconsistent information is ignored. Children's social cognitions of the adult world are likely, therefore, to be strongly influenced by stereotypic views of roles regardless of children's actual social experience. Martin & Halverson's theoretical perspective is supported by research showing a high level of sex stereotyping in the preschool years which is tenaciously maintained throughout childhood (eg Emmerich & Shepard, 1984). Martin & Halverson (1981) find it surprising that some individual are <u>not</u> highly sex-stereotyped (Bem, 1974) and argue that sex stereotyping is not easily changed by exposure to conflicting evidence. They speculate that flexibility only occurs after individuals have identified with other groups

(high achieving people or people who like music for example) which are not necessarily related to sex. Sex and sex roles then become less evaluative and central to their thinking. Such flexibility of sex-typing is unlikely to be achieved in childhood, according to these authors.

Cognitive-developmental theory (Kohlberg, 1966) suggests that children first achieve gender labelling (by about 2) and gender identity (by about 3) followed by gender constancy between 5 and 7 years. Gender constancy involves the understanding that sex is not influenced by superficial changes in dress or appearance. Before the age of gender constancy, according to cognitive-developmental theory, children are inclined to stick rather rigidly to same-sex play and activities since they are not sure that their gender will not be affected if they adopt opposite sex interests. The cognitive-developmental interpretation suggests that children's construction of roles is not a mere reflection of social reality but depends on the degree of differentiation of cognitive structures.

Whether growth in gender knowledge actually results in less sex-typing is, however, unclear. Smetana & Letourneau (1984) found that reduced sex-typing accompanied greater gender knowledge in preschool girls but not in boys while Emmerich & Shepard (1984) found gender constancy to be irrelevant for the production of sex-stereotyped preferences between 4 and 8.

Bruner & Haste (1987) have recently urged more emphasis on the influence of the child's social interactions with her peers, parents and teachers within the boundaries of her culture, on development. They describe a "quiet revolution" against the Piagetian model of the "lone child" who is an "active scientist". Meanings and concepts are not invented by the child but negotiated within the framework of the culture, according to Bruner & Haste.

Lloyd (1987) contrasts "social representations" of gender which regulate the child's construction of reality, with Piagetian closed structures of logical systems. Lloyd believes that the development of children's thinking about gender is "psychologically embedded" in mothers' social represention of gender. Children therefore acquire their understanding of gender from early contexts of joint action (such as play) with their mothers.

Information processing theory predicts that children's ideas about sex roles will be very little affected by counter-stereotypical social experience during childhood. Cognitive-developmental theory suggests that stereotyping in early childhood regardless of counterstereotypical social experience, but predicts a greater influence of counter-stereotypes on thinking once concrete operations has been achieved because of increased flexibility associated with gender constancy. The social interactionist (Bruner & Haste, 1987; Lloyd, 1987) view would suggest that mutual experience with adults has a major influence on the development of children's concepts.

There is mixed evidence about whether maternal employment has any influence on children's sex-role understandings or attitudes. Marantz & Mansfield (1977) found that daughters of working mothers had fewer sex stereotypes than the daughters of non-working mothers. Age was an influence, with maternal work status being a stronger influence at ages 7 to 8 (compared to 5-6 and 9-11). McKinnon et al (1984) found that working mothers were more liberal than non-working mothers in sex-role attitudes, but that maternal attitudes did not influence the sex-role attitudes of their 3 to 6 year-old children. Richmond-Abbott (1984) found that mothers with professional occupations tended to have daughters with more liberal attitudes. The same was true of sons but the relationship was

not so strong.

There are also contrasting findings on the effect of paternal involvement in the home on children's attitudes. Weinraub et al (1984) showed that paternal participation was related to reduced stereotyping in 2 to 3 year-old children but Marantz & Mansfield (1977) did not find any effect of fathers' domestic participation on the sex role stereotypes of their 5 to 11 year-old daughters. Only a very weak relationship between father's participation and sex role attitudes in 5 and 10 year-olds was found by Baruch & Barnett (1986). Maternal attitudes were a much stronger predictor of children's sex role attitudes.

There have been many changes in the role of women in the last decade. A New Zealand Yearbook essay (1984) documents one of these changes as being that "home-making is no longer the primary and all engrossing career for a number of women". Women in the most likely child-bearing ages (25 to 39) increased their participation in the workforce by 78% between 1971 and 1981. The move for men to participate in the home appears to have been much more gradual (Novitz, 1978). Whether these societal changes are reflected in children's social representations of what adults do is one issue explored in the present study.

In this study, seven and nine year-old children with working and non-working mothers were interviewed to explore their perceptions of mothers', fathers', and teachers' roles. A previous study (Smith, Ballard & Barham, 1986) had showed that many more preschool children perceived their mothers in domestic roles compared to fathers, and that many more children perceived fathers as paid workers than mothers. Children's perceptions of mothers and fathers as engaging in child care roles did not differ overall, but a different type of child care role was ascribed to mothers and fathers. Mothers were described by more children as doing custodial child care and

fathers were described by more children as doing playful fun child care. Perceptions of teachers' roles were compared with parent roles. Teachers were seen by a few children as doing domestic activities but by many children as providing playful educational activities for children. Although a few children saw teachers in a nurturing role this was much less common than it was for mothers and fathers.

Smith et al (1986) also looked at whether type of early childhood setting was related to children's perceptions. It was expected that more children in full-time child care would see their teachers as "parent-like" because of the longer and more intensive contact between teachers and children. Children in full-time child care were expected to be more likely to perceive their mothers as doing paid work and their fathers as involved in child care compared to children in sessional care. These predictions were not borne out. There was no relationship between extra-familial early childhood setting and children's perceptions of parent and teacher roles. It was striking that mothers' paid work seemed invisible to both boys and girls. Although three-quarters of the sample had working mothers only 16% of the children described their mother's role as involving paid work while 36% of children described fathers as doing paid work. Whether older children had a similar view is explored in the present study.

This study was designed to examine whether children's perceptions of parents' and teachers' roles were related to age and to children's experience of having a working mother. It was predicted that more children of working mothers would perceive their mothers as doing paid work and their fathers as making a contribution to domestic and custodial child care activities compared to children with non-working mothers. Older children were expected to be more likely than younger children to have a more flexible and differentiated understanding of their mother's roles. On the

other hand, teachers' roles were expected to be narrowly defined by the older children in the present study compared to those in Smith et al's (1986) study, because of the more specifically educational rather than caring role played by primary compared to early childhood teachers.

Method

Sample

The subjects of this study were 50 J2 and 48 standard 2 children from four Dunedin primary schools in a cross-section of socioeconomic areas in the city. Dunedin is a provincial university city with a population of about 100,000. The families of the children ranged in socioeconomic status (using Elley & Irving's 1985 scale) from the highest (1) to the lowest (6). The mean socioeconomic status for the sample was 2.56 (s.d. 1.52) indicating that it was slightly above average in socioeconomic status.

The J2 children ranged in age from 6 years to 7 years 11 months with a mean age of 7 years and 1 month and a standard deviation of 4.79. The standard 2 children ranged in age from 7 years 9 months to 9 years 10 months with a mean age of 9 years and 1 month and a standard deviation of 5.51. There were 50 boys and 48 girls in the sample. Just over half of the sample (54) had mothers who did paid work while slightly less than half (44) had mothers who did no paid work.

Procedure.

School principals who had agreed to participate in the study sent out a letter to parents of children in the appropriate age groups asking for parental permission for the researchers to interview children. The principal then provided the researchers with lists of J2 and standard 2 children whose parents had given permission for them to be interviewed. Information on parental occupation was also provided by the school.

Researchers selected a roughly equal number of boys and girls, children of working and non-working mothers and J2 and standard 2 children. Between 20 and 25 children came from each of the 4 schools.

An open-ended one-to-one interview format was used. A test-like format with closed-ended questions was not used in order to avoid constricting children's answers towards a limited set of responses as had been done in many previous studies (eg Tephly & Elardo, 1984), and to encourage more open spontaneous conversations with children. The interview included the same questions which had been asked of the preschool children in Smith, Ballard & Barham (1986)'s study but no props were used in the present study. (Small dolls were used to represent mother, father, teacher and child in the former study). Children were asked about what mother, father and teacher "do", what they "have to do for children". what they "do for you" and what you "like doing best" with that person.

Ninety of the interviews were carried out by a research assistant experienced in interviewing children and eight by the author, in a quiet room within each school. Children were told that the researchers were interested in what children thought about what grown-ups did and that there were no right or wrong answers. Most interviews took about 15 minutes. (Other material not reported here was also covered in the interviews).

Interviewers recorded verbatim what the children said. The previous study (Smith, Ballard & Barham, 1986) showed that transcribed taped interviews corresponded very closely with on-the-spot interviewer recorded protocols.

A content analysis was then undertaken of the children's responses using the Smith et al (1986) categories (slightly modified). Five main categories of response were derived:- Domestic, Childcare, Personal, Paid Work and Biological. (The Biological category was the only totally new

category which was not used in the previous Smith et al, 1986 study). The first two categories included seven sub-categories each. For Domestic, the sub-categories were Cooking, Cleaning, Shopping, Washing, Sewing, Outdoor Tasks, Repairs or Building. For Childcare the sub-categories were Custodial, Play/Stimulation/Education, Outings, Physical Punishment, Verbal Control, Positive Socioemotional, and Shared Tasks. Children sometimes gave more than one response in a particular category or sub-category but the coding only indicated presence or absence of response and ignored the number. (This was because the use of several questions about the same role sometimes evoked repetitive answers which did not necessarily cover new ground). Seven interview protocols were randomly selected and independently scored by a second coder to assess the inter-observer reliability of the coding procedure. This assessment showed that there was 91.1 percent agreement between the two coders.

Results

Age. In order to determine whether there was any difference in the number of 7 year-olds and 9 year-olds making any category of response, chi squares were calculated comparing the number of J2 and Standard 2 children making different responses. There were no significant differences in the number of J2 and Standard 2 children making any category of response.

Sex. A comparison was also made of the number of boys and girls making different categories of response using chi square. More boys (n = 35) than girls (n = 23) saw mother as involved in cooking (chi square = 4.94, $p < .05$) and father as providing play/stimulation/education (boys = 36, girls = 23, chi square = 5.92, $p < .05$). More girls (n = 27) than boys (n

= 10) described mother as doing shopping (chi square = 13.69, $p < .001$), and as giving positive socioemotional responses (n for girls = 18, n for boys = 9, chi square = 4.67, $p < .05$). There were no significant differences between boys and girls in any of the other categories of responses to mothers and fathers or in responses to teachers.

Maternal Work Status. There were no significant differences in the number of children with working mothers compared to children with non-working mothers making any category or sub-category of response to mothers and fathers. There were 15 children of working mothers who described mothers as doing paid work compared to 7 children of non-working mothers but this difference did not reach significance (chi square = 1.54, n.s.).

Comparison of Responses to Mothers, Fathers and Teachers.

Insert Table 1 about here

The children's responses to questions about parent and teacher roles are shown in Table 1. The totals show that mothers were described about twice as often as doing domestic tasks as fathers (chi square = 27.26, $p < .001$). Cooking was mentioned by most children (n=58, 59%) as part of mother's role, followed by cleaning (44.9%), shopping (37.8%), washing (21.4%), sewing (8.2%), outdoor tasks (4.1%) and repairs/building (3.1%). The most common domestic role mentioned for fathers was repairs/building (n = 32, 32.7%), followed by outdoor tasks (n= 27, 27.6%). About 10% of children said that fathers did meal preparation and shopping but 5% or less mentioned any of the other domestic subcategories.

Chi square comparisons of responses towards mothers and fathers showed that more children described mothers as doing the following domestic tasks

compared to fathers:- meal preparation (chi square = 11.52, p , .001), cleaning (chi square = 31.04, p < .001), shopping (chi square = 15.51, p < .001), washing (chi square = 9.85, p < .01), and sewing (chi square = 5.44, p < .05). Fathers were described more often as doing outdoor tasks (chi square = 17.06, p < .001) and repairs or building (chi square = 24.02, p < .001). There were no responses describing teachers as doing domestic tasks.

The total number of responses describing mother's role as involving child care was only slightly and non significantly (chi square = .98) highe than for fathers. The most frequent subcategory for mothers was custodial (n = 72, 73.3%), followed by play/stimulation (42.9%), outings (32.7%) and positive socioemotional (27.6%) and shared tasks (13.3%). Verbal control (7.1%) was a very uncommon response as was physical punishment (2%).

The most common child care subcategory for fathers was play/stimulation/education (n = 59, 60.2%), followed by outings (44.9%) custodial (37.8%) and positive sociemotional (21.4%) and shared tasks (13.3%). Only 2% of children described fathers as giving physical punishment and none at all said that fathers gave verbal control.

Chi square comparisons showed that mothers received more responses than fathers for custodial (chi square = 11.24, p < .001) and verbal control (chi square = 7, p < .05). The differences between the responses describing fathers as doing play/stimulation/education (n = 59) and mothers (n = 42) did not reach significance nor did the numbers describing fathers (n = 44) and mothers (n = 32) going on outings. However when outings and play/stimulation/education responses were pooled fathers (n = 103) were described by more children than mothers (n = 74) as doing these things (chi square = 4.76, p < .05). There were no significant differences for any of the other sub-categories of child care for mothers

or fathers.

More than twice as many children (n = 51) described fathers as doing paid work compared to mothers (n = 22)(chi square = 11.52, $p < .001$). More children described mothers as having a biological role compared to fathers (chi square = 7.36, $p < .05$) but only a small number of children mentioned this aspect even for mothers (n = 10). There was no significant different between responses describing mothers and fathers as doing personal things. By far the most common description of teachers was as doing play/stimulation/education. Nearly all of the children perceived the teacher in such a role (n = 95, 96.9%). About a fifth of children described teachers as providing verbal control, doing custodial child care and giving positive socioemotional responses. Teachers were described by significantly fewer children as providing custodial child care (chi square = 35.35, $p < .001$) and outings (chi square = 24, $p < .001$) compared to mothers and fathers, but more children described them as providing play/stimulation/education (chi square = 22.41, $p < .001$) and verbal control (chi square = 22.88, $p < .001$) compared to mothers and fathers. Similar numbers of children described teachers as giving physical punishment, doing shared tasks or giving positive socioemotional responses as for mothers and fathers. Teachers were described by only 4 children as doing paid work and by no children as doing personal things.

Discussion

The study did not show any influence of age or maternal work status on children's understanding of parental roles. More girls than boys saw mothers as involved in shopping and more boys than girls saw mothers as doing cooking and fathers providing play or stimulation. Both 7 and 9

year-old children perceived their mothers in a domestic role much more than their fathers. Mothers were seen by more children as involved in activities concerned with running the home than fathers, particularly cooking, cleaning and shopping. The main domestic activies associated with fathers were outdoor tasks and repairs or building. Mother's servicing role in the family is illustrated by this response:

> They can be quite good at looking after children and doing all the housework for the father.

Although the overall numbers of child care responses did not differ fo mothers and fathers, a slightly different pattern of child care activities was associated with mothers'and fathers' roles. Mothers were described by the largest number of children as doing routine custodial child care and fathers were described by the largest number of children as providing playful stimulation. Fathers were more likely to be seen as taking children on outings or engaging in playful or educational activities than mothers. This response by a 9 1/2 year-old is a good illustration of how dads were seen by many children:

> He talks to me and helps me with my jobs. If I've got nothing to do I ask him and he there's always something I can do for him.

While mothers were seen by more children as providing verbal control over their behaviour than fathers only a very small number of children (7) described mothers as being verbally controlling and no fathers. Some responses indicated that dad was "softer" than mum. This 8 year-old's response describes dad's benign actions compared to mum:

> He's funny and can always make jokes. He takes us out camping sometimes. He's got soft spots - lets us stay up late. Mum

doesn't.

Another example shows dad's role as source of finance and of humour.

> When he takes us out for fish and chips Mum says "Have you got the money?". He says "Yup" and we all rush to Dad. He puts on a sad look.

Similar numbers of children described an affective role for mothers and fathers although the quality of the responses indicates a somewhat different perspective for mothers and fathers. For example an 8 1/2 year-old, when asked what mothers did said:

> She can look after you when you fall over. Your dads don't as much, they just say "You'll be all right"!

The different more robust quality of the affective relationship between children and fathers compared with mothers is also indicated in the following examples:

> She loves you and cares for you.

> Sometimes he plays with me and gives me horsebites on the leg and tickles me.

Even when fathers did do custodial child care or domestic work it was often in the role of helper to the mother rather than as initiator of the activity. For example:

> He can help the mother if they are in hospital look after the children.

> He can help mum load the dishwasher.

It is interesting that mother could be seen in a supportive role to father as the educator/playmate:

> She helps me with my Maths when Dad isn't there.

The children were much more likely to describe father as doing paid work compared to mothers. About 52% of children described fathers as doing paid work but only 22% of mothers. Even when mothers were perceived as doing paid work their fathers work clearly had more status in the eyes of these two 7 year-olds.

> He can sometimes do a big job and raise a whole lot of money.

> He goes to work too but it's not the kind of work Mum does. It's better work because he gets more money. Mum only gets 20 cents an hour and he gets $2.

Teachers were never described as doing any domestic activities. Their primary role was as educators. The category play/stimulation/education was devised for the study of preschool children and was perhaps a little broad for this study since the teacher's role at preschool level in play and education was more congruent than at the primary level. Most children in th study described the teacher as teaching them symbolic tasks in a classroom setting. Along with this educational role often went a disciplinary or controlling role. For example these 9 year-old children described the teacher thus:

> She teaches us how to do our handwriting and how to do it properly. She corrects your errors. If you don't understand it, she tells you the meaning of it.

She helps us learn the times table so that when we go to high school we know them all.

They have to tell you things - tidy up your desk, do your maths, do your printing, work on your project.

They teach you not to be noisy, not to interrupt, to put up your hand and not to speak over the top of someone else.

Teachers were not confined entirely to an educative role, however, since a number of children described teachers as caring for them and rewarding them. The quality of positive socioemotional responses from teachers, however, differed from those of parents. Teachers were more often described as giving systematic rewards for good behaviour or work

If we get on the mat and sit up straight, she might let us get a stamp.

There were also examples of the teachers more spontaneous role in providing treats:

Our teacher gives us lollies and most Fridays he gives us iceblocks.

It was much more uncommon to see teachers in a more parental role as in this example.

Teachers look after you just like a family.

The 7 and 9 year olds in this study have highly similar views about the roles of mother and father to those of the 3-4 year-olds in Smith et

al's study (1986). Although the quality of the responses is different, with the older children giving more lengthy and elaborated responses, the components of children's understanding of parent roles have a pattern which strongly resembles those of the younger children. The only new element in the older children's responses was that a small number of children (10%) could describe the mother's biological role of having babies. None of the preschoolers mentioned this aspect. Domestic roles were perceived as highly similar by pre and primary school children. For example 54% of the 3-4 year-olds described mother as doing meal preparation compared to 59% of the 7-9 year-olds and 42% of 3-4 year-olds and 45% of 7-9 year-olds said mother did cleaning.

There is also a similar pattern of differential response towards mothers and fathers in the present study and in Smith et al's (1986) study. Fathers' and mothers' domestic activities are seen by preschoolers and older children in traditional masculine and feminine stereotypes. Fathers were again in this study of older children, as in the study of preschoolers, just as likely to be described as doing child care as mothers, but they were seen as providing playful stimulation and mothers as day-to-day routine care. The perception of fathers in the paid workforce much more than mothers is another finding which replicates the former study.

Unlike the findings for parents, there was more contrast in preschool and primary school children's views of teachers. Smith et al (1986) investigated whether there was an overlap between children's views of parents and teachers and found that there were some overlaps and some differences. Teachers were seen in a more specific and limited role than parents with a lower intensity of affect, and primarily as educators. While teachers were infrequently described by preschoolers as doing

domestic work there were some similarities in children's perceptions of teachers' and parents' child care role. The present study shows that primary teachers were not perceived as doing any domestic activitivies while Smith et al (1986) found that about a fifth of the preschoolers described domestic activities for teachers. The strongly educational role of teachers becomes even more salient for primary school children (95% mentioned it) compared to preschool children (86% mentioned it). A custodial child care role for teachers is seen by fewer primary (18%) than preschool children (36%) and verbal control is also more often mentioned by primary children (20%) than preschool children (12%). Positive socioemotional responses by teachers were described by similar numbers of children at preschool (15%) and primary level (18%), but the quality of the responses is somewhat different implying that older children perceive a rather deliberate strategy of teachers use of contingent reward.

Teachers' roles are seen as even more differentiated from parents' roles at the primary school level than they were at preschool level, even though some overlap in parent/teacher roles remains. Teachers have a specifically educational and to a lesser extent controlling role according to the 7 to 9 year-olds in this study. The teacher's role as educator of a group is likely to be a reflection of the reality of teachers dealing with large groups of children within the framework of a more formal symbolic curriculum. It is perhaps surprising that teachers are still seen as fulfilling a caring role and hardly ever in a punitive role. These findings are supportive of Katz's (1980) view of teacher's roles as more specific, limited with less intense affect than mother's roles.

The findings of the present study suggest that children's social understanding of parent roles are relatively little affected by their age or whether their mother worked or not. Whereas cognitive-development

theory might have predicted a more flexible pattern of understanding for older children than for preschoolers, this was not shown to be true of the present sample. On the other hand cognitive-developmental theory emphasises the child's own unique construction of her social world. The child's view, from this perspective, is not a mere reflection of social experience but of her active efforts to make sense of her world. In other words the child's perceptions cannot be taken as a reflection of reality.

Martin & Halverson's (1981) believe that gender schema are relatively impervious to conflicting evidence and that stereotypes are likely to be maintained throughout childhood. Their view gains some support from this study.

The social interactionist view (Bruner & Haste, 1987; Lloyd, 1987) suggests that children acquire their meanings about gender in the context of joint action in the same setting as the child - for example parents at home and teachers in the classroom. The author finds this theoretical framework the most convincing fit for the data, especially the qualitative aspect of it. Children's understanding in this study seems to be a reflection of their direct experience.

Maternal employment is a relatively distant experience for many children since they rarely share experiences in their mother's (or father's) workplace. It is much more likely that children learn about gender from the context of the home and of domestic and family activities. Children's comments suggest that they come to understand parental and teacher roles from a context of joint action with their mothers, fathers and teachers. Children acquire knowledge of what their parents do through such experiences as going to the fish and chip shop , going fishing , helping an adult make a cake, rolling on the floor being tickled by dad, rather than by their factual knowledge that mum goes out to work. In the

context of parents' sex stereotyped division of labour within the home and children's participation in these activities, it is not surprising that children see their parents in traditional roles.

Children do perceive their fathers in occupational roles even though they are unlikely to have much direct experience of them. Such understanding is likely to emerge from conversation rather than joint action. It was notable that descriptions of the workplace were much less vivid than those of the home or classroom. Societal changes are not therefore reflected in children's concepts in the present study. Since these are primarily learned within the context of a family which retains its traditional nature rather than in the wider society where roles are changing, it is unlikely that children's concepts will become more liberal in the foreseeable future. It would be interesting to examine gender and role representation by children (such as children on the kibbutz or in China) whose preschool or primary curriculum included direct experience in the workplace.

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Table 1

Children's Perceptions of the Roles of Mother, Father and Teacher

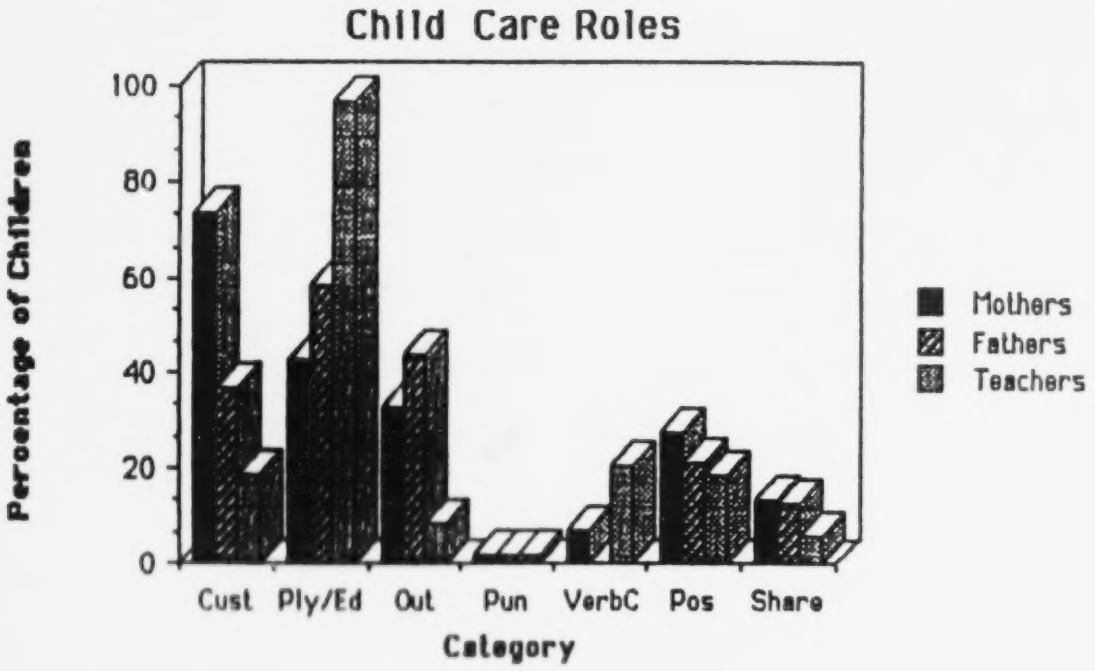
1. DOMESTIC

Subcategory	Mother		Father		Teacher		Examples
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Meal Preparation	58	59.2	10	10.2	0	0	"Cooks the tea." "Feeds me."
Cleaning	44	44.9	5	5.1	0	0	"Make the beds." "Put away their toys."
Shopping	37	37.8	10	10.2	0	0	"She takes them to the shop and sometimes buys them clothes"
Washing	21	21.4	5	5.1	0	0	"They would hang out the washing and take it in."
Sewing	8	8.2	1	1.02	0	0	"She can make dresses and clothes".
Outdoor Tasks	4	4.1	27	27.6	0	0	"Hosing the garden." "They can climb up on the roof."
Repairs/ Building	3	3.1	32	32.7	0	0	"He can do repairs on things." "Fix cars."
Total	175		90		0		

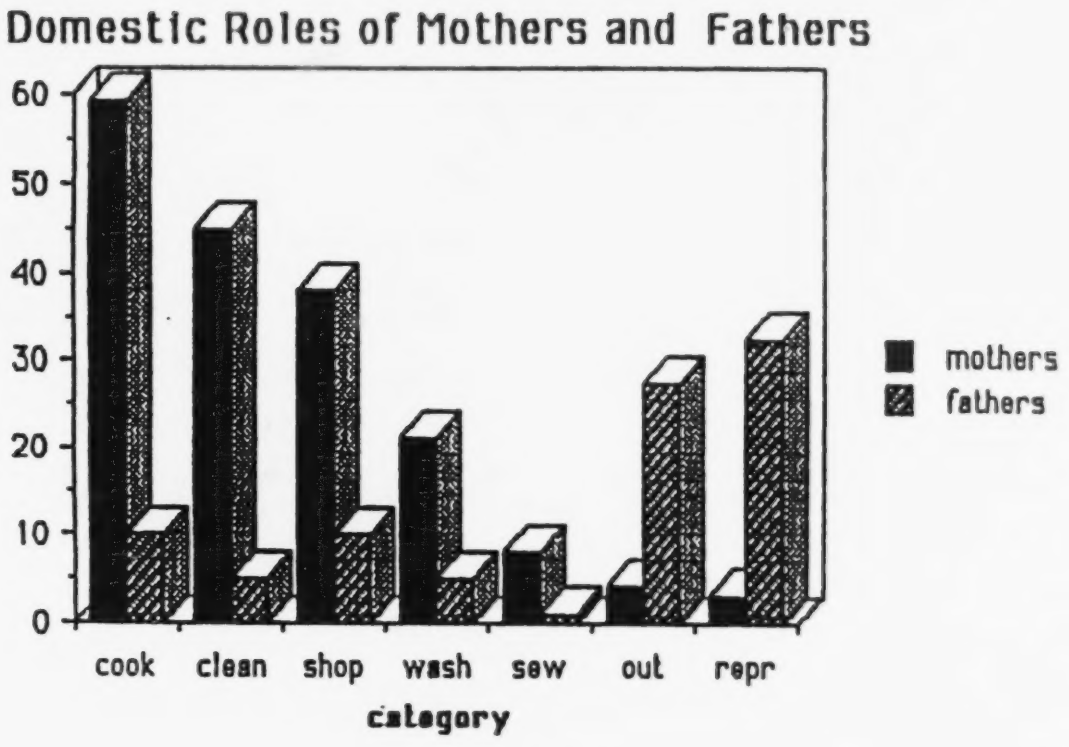
Table 1 (cont)

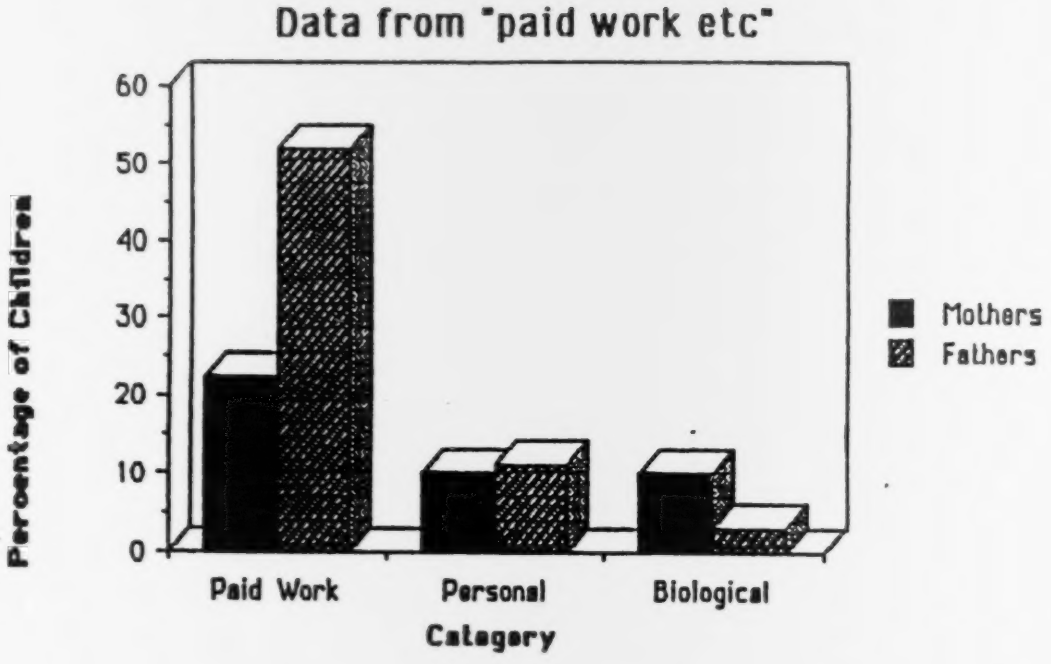
Subcategory	Mother		Father		Teacher		Examples
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
2. CHILDCARE							
Custodial	72	73.3	37	37.8	18	18.4	"Looks after and cares for children." "Puts on my brother's nappies."
Play/Stimulation/Ed	42	42.9	59	60.2	95	96.9	"Sometimes he plays with me and gives me horsebites on the leg and tickles me." "Can teach children how to read." "Have fun with them and play with them."
Outings	32	32.7	44	44.9	8	8.2	"Takes me out for picnics." "He takes me for a walk."
Physical Punishment	2	2	2	2	2	2	"Smacks me when I've been naughty."
Verbal Control	7	7.1	0	0	20	20.4	"Tells them off." "She tells G off when she hurts me." "Settles them down when they are noisy."
Positive Socioemotional	27	27.6	21	21.4	18	18.4	"Kiss me goodbye in the mornings." "She loves you and cares for you."
Shared tasks	13	13.3	13	13.3	6	6.1	"Helping her make cakes."
Total	195		176		167		

Table 1 (cont)


Child Care Roles
Percentage of Children
100
80
60
40
20
0
Cust
Ply/Ed
Out
Pun
VerbC
Pos
Share
Category
Mothers
Fathers
Teachers

	Mother		Father		Teacher		Examples
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
3. PAID WORK	22	22.4	51	52	4	4.1	"Earn money by going to work." "Be a farmer." "He can work at Telecom"
4. PERSONAL	10	10.2	11	11.2	0	0	"Have visitors around." "He goes out windsurfing."
5. BIOLOGICAL	10	10.2	1	3	0	0	"Make babies." "They can born babies."


Domestic Roles of Mothers and Fathers
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
cook
clean
shop
wash
sew
out
repr
category
mothers
fathers


Data from "paid work etc"
Percentage of Children
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Paid Work
Personal
Biological
Category
Mothers
Fathers